The Lutanist

ALICE WILSON

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THE LUTANIST

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THE LUTANIST

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HERO TO LEANDER

Was it yestermorn at Aphrodite's shrine
I stood a Vestal 'mid the flowery feast,
Cool-bosomed as a Goddess in her stone?
The chanting hushed, the garlands hung a'dream,
As into my young hands the solemn priest
Presented honors. Serene as morning star
I stood to pour libations and let fall
Rich incense into purifying flame.
Yet e'er I served I raised my pious eyes
As ever toward my Goddess.—Lo! instead
(Oh, how the sweet remembrance startles yet!)
My lifted gaze was caught upon thy gaze
And burning hung for one eternal moment.

Leander, my beloved, from what star
Came thy dear birth upon me? Suddenly
The sound of priest's voice drew me back to vows!
All while I fed the flame its holy food
Mine eyes close-shut their all dismayed sight
Seeking their olden memories and vows.
Where went they? Where my goddesses beloved?
Where the pure calm of statued presences?
Ah fled, before thine own white-passioned face,
Godlike yet far more dearly beautiful,
Whose worship newly bound me.

Oft had I scorned
To hear how sporting nymphs, in deep recesses
Of rock-cleft woodland sacred to their kind,
Full swiftly were caught back by prisoning reach
Of forest half-god—and their play was lost.

Even so was I caught up from simple play
Of temple service to thy soul's high plain!

Didst dream, Leander, while thou sawest me there,
How I stood overwhelmed before the throng?
My frightened purity, like flocks of doves,
Flew through me, o'er me, hiding with their wings
All the young faces of my sisters;—thine,
Immovable and adoring, not.
Some shock of wonder drew the feast apart.
I trembled. Thou didst tremble too, and went,
Oh slowly, slow, with oft-returning glance
Which I, too, greeted, long and slow and sweet.

How chilly grown the temple seemed, bedimmed
By long reflections of the marble shrines!
Scentless the garlands hung, heavy the air
With faded incense; mute the silence fell
From the dumb lips of carven goddesses!
Like song unuttered in a birdling's throat
Rose sudden sweetness from the thought of thee,
And with a sob I fled.

How far, Leander,
Measures the world from this high tower down?
It seems a bud I plucked and left to float
Upon the sea waves when I blindly climbed
Up to my home of bare-walled chastity.
All day I wove my dreams and wrought thereon
Thy lily-face plucked cool from memory.
All day instead of prayer I murmured low
Thy name, Leander, and the air grew sweet
With first faint stir of scents awake at dawn.

Long had I sat alone, shut in and high
In awful sanctity. The late hours fell
And found me each one prayerless as the last.
The last watch waned and waned; when soft the casement
Was opened as a rose 'neath some warm touch.
I heard the swift, dark rush of buried waves
As a coiling monster far beneath.
The star-set night looked in. I raised my eyes
Thinking to take the air with soft drawn breath.

It was my lily bloomed against the dark!
It was my soul's star set so near mine own!
For fairness, it had been a young god's face
Drawn near to me to claim my vestalhood,
But for the swift, pure mortal rush of bliss
Which deathless Gods are powerless to bestow.
I trembled as a wakened wood-pool stirred
From tranquil dimness through its shimmering depth
By one gold-shafted star. Thy voice's breath
Fluttered my pulses as a million leaves
Would be disturbed beneath a breeze's breath.

"Good night, dear Nymph"; thus slow thy silver words,
Scarce trusting to the silence, fell to me
In such sweet speech it would have held us long,
But that each moment still more tensely moved
Beneath new wonder. So we were drawn on
To nearer utterance, until each of each
Craved delicate contact, and thou enteredst!

The marvel of thee melted, as thou stoodst
Sea-drenched, alive, who had been only dream.
And all in sudden horror had closed my joy
But that thy wooing voice grew pitiful.
Thou seemedst so chill and drear, my breast so warm,
I shrank no more. Swift then thine arms of flame
Leapt round me.—As the morning star, low-hung
Upon the border of the out-lived night
In acme of tense shining, fades at last
In the embracing glory of the sun,
So I in thee, Leander.

Then was it that I heard
The soft brush of the velvet-footed Gods
Departing from the room. With solemn sweep
Their garments nectar-dyed trailed after them
And slow the gleam of their sun-burnished hair
Retired wistfully. Yet once they turned,
With gracious arms held toward me; (Oh thine arms
Sweetlier bound me) and look of divine awe
Whose fire was cold, they bent. But as of yore
From their proud lips they gave no utterance,
And vanished hungered, balked, but beautiful.
Sweet doth the memory of that earliest night
Come to me now, as scent of roses gone.

How the tower rocks
Beneath a wind inimical to love!
My lamp's gold flare battles against the dark
Even as thou, white-limbed, art tossed by waves
That breast thy coming.

I have never known
Such deep, unending dark to smite the world;
Or felt long length of time uncoil so slow
And slower coil again to stretch more slow
Twixt me and thee, a never-ending span!
How the tower rocks!

PRIMAVERA

TO E. C.

Never was such a Spring
  Leapt in a moment to life,
Ran like a flame of joy
  Over the earth and fled
Into the air with a song!
  There it paused, and lo!
It clings! With feathery breath
  Sways and lilts in the winds
And clings! Brushes the world
  Under and over. Stays
On the earth at the feet
  As a dancing sea.
Bursts into buds overhead,
  Ripples out millions of leaves,
Amasses ethereal folds
  Of billowy mists of bloom;
Pierces the sullen sod
  With staffs of exquisite splendor,
Beckons the eye to delight
  In discerning the dawn of its wonder;
Breaks the web of the air
  Into ethereal beauty;
Sings and fills the branches
With gushes of golden light;
  Sets the young birds wild
With their first sweet singing;—
  Lifts the heart of the man,
Urges his feet to lightness,
Lures him along to his joy,

Sends him flute for piping,
  Sets him atune to his dreams.

Never was such a maid,
  Veiled in the vision of life;
Masked with the grace of the flowers,
  Nimbussed, brimming, alert;
Touching hands with the East,
  Giving gaze to the West;
Flying words and a song
  To the South, to the North;
Gathering, giving, goes
  Over the blossoming world;
Singing the song of the stars,
  Winding the way of delight,
Vision of motion hung
  Twixt down-dropped meaning of stars
  And full up-bloom of the earth;
Set asway to the tune
  Of the lavish graces of girls;
  Fair as a sea-foam flower
In-blown to the sweet-rooted earth,
  But tanged by the scent of the sea;
  Tresses of billowy bronze
Held as you hold a bird
  Back by the wings from flight;
Eyes of eternal mirth
  Touched with the largened glow
Of a deserted star;
  Face out of wan star-gloom,
Contour curved as a shell,
  Pearl bloomed, by the dream
Of sea-swayed mysteries.

There, as she halts half-a'wing,
Love leans down to enfold her,
Out of the soft-housed winds
Reaches arms to uplift her
High to undying height.
She, Primavera the maid,
Loth to leave or to linger,
Pauses with scarce-touching feet
On the delicate crest of the bloom.

Spring in the upward flight
Of a song-throated lark to the sky!
Maid alit for a breath
To break anew into flight!—
Two ephemeral dreams
Touching their ecstasy;
And the earth caught between,—
Pressed till it overbrims
With blossom and leaf and song.
Fair is the vernal vision,
Sudden as shadow of heaven.
Catching our breath we lean
Forward to treasure its substance—
Ah! to the bosom eternal
Soon it is ravished away,
Kept for its coming again
Rejuvenescent.

From here the whole of Umbria mates the sea
With wonder of its hills of heavenly blue;
Which in the annals of old Umbrian art
Lie caught and live in lovely effigy.
Fruitful against the sea the dark earth lies
All given o'er to pastoral intent.
Upon the far-off hills the small white oxen
Daintily tread. Within the level plains
The breed of larger gray with widened horns
In quiet strength their ancient burden draw
In harmony with earth. Upon the slopes
The flocks of brown sheep bend toward the herbage
To graze and move like shapes of things in dreams.
Tender the winds that fan the peaceful toilers
Moving in quiet grace about their task
Of training vines around the small bared trees.
Over the deepening valleys, plains and hills,
The white roads wind in peace amid the fields
That lie sea-deep in lovely harvestings.
Afar the pallid cities cling like shades
Against the mountains. All the land between
Is decked with low-hung arches of the vine,
And hedges brushed with bloom can barely hold
The light-winged ecstasies of wooing birds.

Amid the surging loveliness of Spring
The broken towers of the city seem
Like birdless nests in winter branches bare;
And, set in strength, the old Etruscan arches
Gaze and gaze upon their vanished dream.

These are your hills, oh men of buried days!
Yours, though ye be not here with lordly step
Stamping your own! They speak in gentle tongue
Which once were scarred and branded by your brawls!
I see ye yet among them, men of old!
Out of the cloistered ages of the past
Ye stare like aliens! Not even death
Could conquer, quite, such lives. Its bonds are frail
To hold such molten spirits, or to crush
Those wills that dared defiance to the world.

Over your parapets of stone I lean,
And let my sight have happy mastery
Of fair, unravished Umbrian loveliness.
Even here ye once were wont to lean
And gaze upon the far, unconscious towns
Like hawks upon a gray meek-breasted dove,
Until your sight grew hot with your desire.
Then ye might never cease until ye won
Homage abject, possessed the lovely town
Whether Assisi, Foligno, Spoleto,
Gubbio, Siena—stilling their dumb cries
With your long hands of war.

Or else ye mark
Beyond the hidden hills a brother brood
Return from banishment. The exiled lords
Return! Ye spy them yet afar, that come
To match the setting sun its gorgeous hues
With their assembled splendor. Slowly they wind
Out of disfavored darkness, across the plains,

The gracious sunned and shadowed Umbria,
Up the hushed slope, beneath your downward gaze,
Their way to long-awaited victory.
But ever under surface of success
Surged the deep sea of passions never quelled;
And each in turn astride on fortune's crest
Plunged to disaster. Hark ye to the next!

The lords in turn lie dreaming all too long,
Until their dream is shattered and its light
Is shed upon the morning of their foe!
Long hid in barren nests and wind-roofed places
Kneading and gathering forces of strong men,
The men of common mould used well the years
To make their leader, so to lead them home.
The dreaming lords awake! The fierce town rings
With fighting cries, and down and down they swoop
Like winds to sweep all opposition by.
In vain, ye victims of relentless change!
The very winds that swept you to a deed
Went over you and onward to new zones.
As well for you to bide and mend your wounds
Till with new daring you arose and caught
The pinions of new winds to carry you!

Makers and marrers! Too oft your eerie nest,
Though set within its battlements of stone,
Was shaken by your flaming passions breath.
The annals weary with your fruitless fights!
Is there no other note? Aye, here it reads:
The gay child-hearts of ye that sang aloud
Along the ages gray with history.

'Tis here we learn from you! Ye wore delight
Of earth and waking hearts as flower-wreaths
To grace the feast of life; nor let the weight
Of evils smother your glad-running step.
I see your feasts, that sprang to utterance
In joyful banners, silken, crested, swung
'Neath winds of daring splendor; in arches wrought
Into their form by daring artist hands,
And set with capstone, quivering to the heights!
Delicate flowers held in bands of scent,
Withstanding death until a farther morn
That they might hang the world with garlands. Spears,
Subdued to peace, couched dumb; and armors' clang
Renounced its harsh reverberating voice
To take on muffled, dulcet harmonies.
Fierceness, clad in garment of content,
Embraced the beauty of the captured hour
Like an all-amorous hawk who bends him down
To feel his blood unfevered running clear
And lets his hot touch cool among the calms
Of pleasure. Full the vintaged wines gushed forth
From jewelled fountains into goblets chased
By artisans with soul for pencil point.
Golden speeches ran rare answers up
To lift more silvery laughter, till the sky
Leaned down to draw the music to its depth.
Brave-floating plumes topped rich habiliments
With pride of motion; caught the flowing sun;
Dared the winds, and nodded gayly past.
Pearls, thickly sewn as stars in firmament,

Bedecked the dark-haired daughters of the land
From whence shown out their own true beings'
worth
In voice, in eyes, in wild, sequestered heart.
A sumptuous beauty theirs, close held within
The cup of carven lineage proudly high
At whose enchiselled brim the fire welled
Unspilled. Endowed the maidens walked
With hidden graces harbored as deep gold
All latticed-windowed; till the ripened hour
Called them to laughter, bloom and lavishment.
For these the dark stones of Perugia lay
Hidden beneath a wilderness of boughs
Uprooted from the nursery of spring
And fetched, all full of scent and vernal green,
With lightest carol, thus to grace the town.

What mattered ye the shadows o'er your feast?
Whether the sudden treacheries that leapt
Out of envious hearts to smite your joy;
Or malice, or despair made black enough
To deal its poison; or the gaudy show
Of powers and potentates that spun ye round
With web of some disastrous loveliness
By their bright goings mid your festivals;
What mattered ye? The song was in your hearts,
Your life was in the song. And all your battle-
ments
Put off their memories of war. They, too,
Sprang into singing!

But, stranger marvel yet,
Days were when halcyon lulls o'ercame your moods

With tender yearning toward dove-like calls
That fluted o'er your wars. Then would ye cease
Your hawk-like flights and quarrelings, to watch
From these same parapets, the mediant forms
Of men of peace, whose holy radiance went
Like breath of roses o'er your spirits wounds;
Aye, overflooded all the factioned world
With singing of sweet wonder, which so filled
The ears of men with heavenly ravishment
They held mute faces up for purity.
Ye loved and nurtured that immortal plot
Of spiritual green which ran like light
Out of the gray-worn convent solitudes,
Under the burning gaze of splendid thrones,
When creeds were crushed 'neath mitres august sway,
Ran, and grew gay with radiant little flowers
All water-fed with mercy, joy and love.
Marvellous little plot! its sweet endowment
Drew ye to grace and bended knees, my wolves,
And hallowed your stained natures.

I fold the close-writ scroll. Such were ye
Lords and slaves within yourselves as we,—
May be more splendid, more of primal force,
Awaking from the darkness of the past
With too great heritage, and turning spendthrift;
Lavishing your force, your passions, colors,
Thoughts, desires, until yourselves and earth
Were drained of life, and all the worn-out world
Cried mercy. Now when all that splendid tide
Has ebbed, we walk upon the shore and prize
Each bit of wreckage as a monument.

INVOCATION

Be near me, Spirit of Eternal Beauty! Stay
Not far, with resting wings upon the outer air;
Where, in thine ineffable presence of pure prayer,
The gathering heaviness of life must lift away.

Such moments come when mortals, under own
stress
Oft too intense perception, feel a keen distress;
When loveliness is pain which, scaling ever higher,
Draws the spirit through divine refining fire.

When it touches at the morn of high insight,
Alight as is a branch with weight of crowning
bloom,
Too frail, too faint, it falls beneath its own delight
Back into the bonds of long-used doom.

Then leaning o'er the bars to breathe unprisoned
air,
Oh, then it finds Thee waiting, invisible and rare!
Mystic Consolation, Revealing Visitor,
Unbodied Essence, souls' strange Progenitor!

It meets thy spiritual gaze across the deep
Translucent area of mooned and scented dark;
It feels thy pinion's breath across the windless
steep,
Before thy voice its intuitions hark.

Thy touch of calm forbids its further pilgrimage,
Thou pausest at its eager hope of heritage.
Then, as a bending mother whose little child is
stilled,

Thou leavest with thy mystery of mission unfulfilled.

Oh, tell me, most immeasurable Being!—Thou,
Through my closed lids whom I so well see,
Are we only dreamers vouchsafed a dream of Thee
Which temporally aureoles our spirit-brow?

Must our fainting hands at death let fall forever
All the garnered beauty, all the vainly sought?
Frail flesh at failing the sweet links dissever
Binding sense and spirit in immortal thought?

Sweep thou thine answer through the waiting strings
Of my harp soul; then with eternal hand
Touch it again to silence! May be I understand
And hold the prescience of immortal things.

HERMIT THRUSH

Upon the timeless hour, deep and still,
When lesser song-birds seek their early nests,
Far off adown the solemn aisles of air
  The vibrant tones are heard
  Which thou, oh hermit bird,
Consumatest by melodious care,
With exquisitely slow and long-drawn rests
Between each finely-modulated trill.

The tempered ocean's ever-measuring roll
Remains in far abeyance from the shore;
Down-fallen all the wind's unsheavéd hoard
  Into a murmurous sound
  Along the odorous ground;
When high from templed pine thou dost abroad
Thy store of beauty lavishly outpour
From the scarce sung recesses of thy soul.

Doth the chaste temple of the moon contain,
Imprisoned, thine enchanted spirit mate,
Whose amber buried shape so faintly seen
  Wakens your lyric quest?
  Ah, woodland dreaming breast!
How camest thou by such yearning art to wean,
Here where the sea-crests break the rock by hate,
Their goal through virile mastery to gain?

Oh, hermit, while thy wooing doth unfurl
Its lyric sweetness o'er this chosen hour,
The wide earth waits in quite ecstasy
  Before thy treasured throat,
  Each golden-measured note

Sinks in its bosom as a pearl down sea,
Caught by a water queen within her bower
And hostaged in a wave-swayed curl.

Canst take my heart as jewel casket, say,
So when the solitary days are drear
And I no more may hold nor hallow them
  With glory that is gone,
  Thou pricelessly singst on
This mythic sun-god's million-rippled gem,
And leadest me on to touch with vision clear
The treasured thought of this immortal day?

Thy song unlooseth prisoned memories
Of far-off morning forests where I met,
Propitiant at haunted fairy rings,
  Deer's eyes across the gloom;
  And set my lyric bloom
In dreams companioned by love murmurings
On morning hillsides fragrance-filled and wet
With lingering dews and fresh with minstrelsies.

Hast ever sung in such brown beechen grove,
Enriched with olden dignity and deep
In sunken aeons of dark leavéd soil,
  Where footstep falls across
  Successive knolls of moss
Outbroken softly under bloomy spoil
Of delicatest ferns that waving keep
All cool the hanging lillies of our love?

Oh bird of singing, lovest thou this land
Whose vastness overweighs thy tender flight?

Doth the far-boasted freedom of the air
  Give promised buoyancy?
  Or lacks it not to thee
Of primal splendor thy long-promised share?
Nor suffers not thy virginal delight
For old world touch of nature's time-stained
    wand?

I miss the faggot-gatherers old and dear,
Who lean to earth with bent and weary back,
Yet leave the woodland blest beyond their ken
  With aura of that dome
  Which hallowed them, when home
With humble pittance they return again
In after-glow of beauty. Alas the lack
Of all such humble forest-beauty here!

The happy woodsman by his haunted stream,
The springing jodel of ebullient hearts
From hill to hill; the invisible hands
  Of brotherhood twixt nature
  And every leaping creature;—
All clothed beliefs of those sweet, haunted lands
Where inner sense of beauty's truth imparts
A reverence to man's eternal dreams.

Soon when the summer, ripening to its goal,
Lies richly caught amid yon bed of grasses,
Or blown into a level flare of light
  Along the mown leas,
  Or sunk in low-marsh seas,
Thou wilt away upon thy stayless flight,
Bequeathing me thy wonder-song which passes
In long-continuing echo through the soul.

I know I must arise with garment fold
A-trail with potency of buried song
Whose richness yet enthralls; must see my earth
  In her own beauty drest;
  Must still my dreaming breast
Of imaged wonders lest I miss the birth
Of vernal vision; lest these valleys throng
With shy-brought gifts mine eyes may not behold.

Then, come the Summer and thy song once more,
I meet its sweetness with a spirit grown
In measure of high reach that seeks to take
  Gifts of the golden past
  Into this region vast;
Singing the while I weave them in the wake
Of vanished languor, or lift them to be blown
As shells upon my great sea-wondering shore.

THE FUCHSIA'S PROPHESY

As were my vision like a pool
In paradisial place,
Its quiet depth perpetuates
Their clear-hung mirrored grace.

They follow me, their shadow
Falls soft on everything,
The faintest ghosts from fairy world
That need remembering!

Oh, pale and crimson prophesy,
A touch for either lid!
Reveal the world of waiting dreams
That veil of weeping hid!

"By a lone shore with friends in grief
Fond-leaning heart with heart
You find, their tear-enshadowed tomb,
Our cluster fallen athwart."

"Or lying clasped in beggar arms
We by our beauty woo
A tender change; for what you give
Ourselves are offered you."

Oh sweet enchantful prophesy,
Thy pale and crimson tone
Proclaims a light upon my way
I had thought fall'n and gone!

"In needle hours, when close you sit
Lap-fulled with broideries,
Your Mother leans to watch our birth
Beneath your fingers rise."

"Your Father, resting through the eve
Within your bower-room,
Enlingers near the casement bright
As a bee o'er our bloom."

Oh, pale and crimson prophesy!
Such hours of grace for me
My bleeding heart of bitterness
Bind with humility!

"When we soft-knotted in with grace,
Upon your bride-breast lay,
Your lover's lips will lean to kiss
Our crimson hearts away."

"When he unpins us from your breast
To loose the happy fold,
Our troubled ghosts are mirrored new
Within his heart of gold."

Thou purple-gloried prophesy,
Fold up your arras bright;
My faltering lids may not endure
Their sacred inner sight.

THE RIVER-PATH

I watch thee lead the people forth
  Beneath the daylight dawning,
And draw them back when quiet eve
  Descends with silent warning.

The man with latent strength renewed,
  The child with soft locks braided,
Young lads and maids with love-ways crude,
  And mothers early jaded.

All pass beyond the distant hill
  Which hides their ways from me;
I weave their humble tales until
  The night falls gradually.

Then lo, they come by groups, in rows,
  Or solitary wending,
While every one among them knows
  Some hand their hearth is tending.

Oh Way, lead out the wide world over
  Where lonely farers roam!
Oh, tender Path beside the river,
  Lead thou my lover home!

THE GLEANER

I left my lover at the town
And swiftly went away
To wander seeking, up and down,
For one last summer day.

I sought it, I found it,
I listened close and long;
I reaped it, I bound it
Into a sheaf of song.

At evening, with the falling moon,
To town again I came;
And laid it 'gainst my lover's shoon
With a kiss of flame.

STARS

Night I saw a golden star,
  Morn I saw none;
Where between the night and morn
  Has the bright star gone?

Star-like my lover came,
  Shining on my soul;
Wondrous as a star he went
  To a veiled goal.

Heaven holds no morning star
  Lighted 'til the even;
Hearts holds Love, through morn and eve,
  High in her heaven.

THE HARPER

The lonely land, the lone land
That's set amid gray hosts of seas!
Oh, I am in the lonely land
Whose eaves adrip with memories!

Would a song come by East or West,
It's I would set my harp atune;
Or, shaken from the white-throat North,
Aye me! I'd meet and greet the boon!

Would a soft word blow up the South,
Breaker of all my lonely woe,
To the Love-land to the South Strand
Its down I'd drop my harp and go!

SONG: THE DESIROUS

Oh would I were the sun,
To flood thy heart with light,
So when the day were done
Thou wouldst regret my flight!

Or were I but the air, love,
To give thee sweetest breath,
I could not from my darling move
Lest I should give thee death.

Yet were I but Life's shadow,
To creep into thy heart,
Of all thy secret thought
I'd be a very part.

PATTERANS

Crossed boughs of leafy green I lay
Along the verge of spring;
The secret sign, that shows the way
For your remembering.

Crossed boughs of still, autumnal leaves
I weave at closing year;
Though thy heart hear the wind that grieves,
Thine eyes will read it clear.

Farewell! until my faltering path
No longer leads alone;
When all its strayed direction hath
Grown blended with thine own!

HIDDEN MEADOW

Away from river and shore,
Alight with shimmer and sun,
I go by a secret path
Which leads in a wanton course;
Now over the open fields,
Wild as a leaping hare
Bound for covert afar,
Now into the deep retreat
Of the cloistered trees in the woodland.
"Coming, coming," I cry
Unto the Hidden Meadow.
Only a field to finish—
Field where the riotous sun
Spawns and spreads his splendor
Over the grasses mown.
Hark! a young bird cries,
Seeking his buried nest;
A heart's call for his mate,
And I answer with a call.
Soon the wings of the distance
Will fold away from my vision,
And I and my heart will be left
Alone in the midst of the meadow.
Hark! a stir in the leaves,
In the hedge beyond the clover
Near the wild path whence I came!
Is there coming another
Into this field of my own,
Some other dreamer and rover
Ready to claim and to take?
Shy of my secret I stand;

Sure as a thief I must be,
Or a miser over his store.
Hush! it is close at hand!

Here is the old gray barn
I remember so long ago.
Silent and still it stands,
A sentinel to warn
Wanderers. Ah, me!
Gray old barn of the past,
Still have you stood all these years
Steadfast and growing to beauty,
Gathering gifts from the seasons,
Color and contour and tone.
These the innate, the eternal,
Gradually given, bestowed
Out of the plenum of beauty.
Let me come unto thy temple
In silence and meekness and love!
Nought have I gathered nor garnered;
Nothing I touched or attained
Stayed with me. All was fleeting,
Dream and shadow of dream.
Ever their forms elusive
Bent to me, touched and departed.
Far and fair were they then,
Fair and far are they now,
Dream and shadow of dream!
Had I mated them with my will
Chance they had stayed to reveal,
Nested and brooded and borne.
Then, on their wings I had flown

Out of this limit of self
Through to empirical realms.

Now to thee, Silent and Faithful,
Temple and Altar abiding,
Back from the call of the distance,
Back from the wide earth's wonder,
By the same little path of yore
That leads through the broken woodland
Into the Hidden Meadow,
I come, I stand, I return.
Let me receive from thee
Some of thy wisdom of being!
Wilful thinking and acting
And mere wander-love to renounce.
Only to stand and to be
In quiet, unquestioning wisdom
Restful, content and profound!

THE PEAR TREE IN BLOSSOM.

It glistens in bridal brightness,
Bedecked with gems of the sun;
With golden promise of fruitage
Blossom and bough are spun.

It pales in the air of the evening,
Weighted with revery,
Veiling itself as a maiden
With bridal modesty.

Then, deep in the darkness enfolded,
It dreams of a distant frost,
The bridegroom beneath whose caresses
Its beauty forever is lost.

HALF LIGHT

Over my morning garden fell
A slender shadow—I loved it well;
But under the gradual glare of day
The tender shadow vanished away.

At night again, when the moon rose high,
From the dreaming casement I could descry,
Shy as a fawn on the silvery plain
The delicate shadow had come again.

"FIN AL MARINA"

I passed an amber villa set on high
  Above the breaking music of the sea,
Within a realm of sun and cloudless sky,
  Upon the crest of a declivity.

Half cinctured by cool cypress to the south,
  To keep the untempered sun from breaking through,
All free with silvery olives to the north
  That courted openly the sun's full view.

Shadow and sun thus graciously combined
  To lay their gifts before the golden door,
Where hidden lovers held their lives enshrined
  Within a dream of beauty evermore.

TWO GARDENS

One overhung with sense of dreams still sleeping
Beneath the breath of lilies past their bloom,
A vigil through unawakened seasons keeping
For some heard echo of predestined doom.

One clearly offering its cool embrasure
To vernal gifts of buds and melodies,
Awake to welcome each appropriate pleasure
That falls from golden leaved futurities.

And neither of the other's nearness guessing,
Because of leaf-enshadowed walls between,
But, unawares, a mutual sky possessing,
And one eve-star, empatronal, serene.

WATER FETE

From the areas of evening
Fell a sudden fairy dream,
Laughing lights and hidden music,
Jewelled boats upon the stream.

Past the bank of sombre pine trees,
O'er the dark and quiet river,
Floats the laughing, lighted image
On and past and out forever.

AN EGYPTIAN TOMB

I

We watched the far Nile's beauty opaline
Until its last gleam vanished; then we turned
Toward the sands. There at thine entrance Thou,
Oh Desert haunted by Divinity,
Didst take our hearts, and gavest to our sight
Thy long, low-couching vision that runs free
To full horizon. Our thoughts became thy vestals.
Our feet were sandalled with thine awe that stills
The outer world to unreality;
And set to kingly rhythm upon thy high
White plains that lie in bondage to the sun.

The desert tidal wave with silent sweep
O'erwhelmed our spirit with a strange enchantment;
And soon we entered into the white blaze
Which is the raiment of that princely realm,
The Valley of the Kings. Long amber cliffs
O'er which the mingling lights fell mazefully,
Reached out their sinuous length to draw us in
Between their oracled recesses.
Day after day we took this burning route
From river westward o'er the golden sands
Toward the old necropolis of Kings.
And day by day we learned to worship more
The strange miraculous beauty of the realm—
Those tides of color, moving ebb and full,
From amethystine hues of shadeless day,
To gradual flood and surge of rose at eve,
Over the vast and desolate solitude.

Far down the valley echoed the unseen
Chorus of boys, one high voice shrilly leading,
Others in sullen answer. Then the sight
That might have been a Pharaoh's lofty way
To level mountains for his monuments.
Under the amber cliffs, like shadows clinging,
Worked the gaunt Arabs, clad in flowing robes
Of inappropriate grace and wielding slow
The same small instruments of olden days.
A line of brown boy children, scantly robed,
Sang as they gathered loosened rock and drift
Into their shallow baskets which they bore
Away upon their heads with singing gait.

One day the workers saw us still afar,
And, running forth with inarticulate cries,
Brought us to where, fresh cleared from muffling sands,
There lay a rough-hewn flight of old worn stone.
It was as if a voice rang suddenly
Out of the tombs, and smote against our hearts;
Then silent, held us hushed in deeper awe.

II

By feeble candle light
The tunnel lead us downward through the dark.
Intently creeping, fearful yet to move
Further with each awed step, we reached a wall
Built well of brick by those last laborers
Who this walled in, upon a long-aged day
The sacred burial. Here the priestly seal,
Last human touch, unbroken met our eyes—
Quiet Anubis couching his slim form
Above bound rows of prisoners, with gaze

Set long in watching the eternal doors.
And near, a rude stone bowl held still the clay
With which the priest had sealed the dumb abode.
The wall, half wrecked by thieves who long ago
Ravished the fair virginity of death,
Betrayed a nestled brood within the gloom.
Flushed like a flock of birds, a color-cloud
Of blue, of ivory, gold, and crimson winged
Its sudden unimprisoned way to our amaze.
This first swift breath of wonder, how it swept,
Silent and sudden over reality
Like trickery of magic to the sense!

The cave was filled with marvellous array
Of funerary gifts beyond all hope
Unbroken, exquisite, in actual, last,
Untouched position, as the attending hearts
Weeping had placed them in the sepulchre.
A sea of vases, painted multitudes,
Covered the sanded floor; and upright rows
Of little shrine-like boxes stood serene,
Close-shutting in the strange ushabti forms
That waited on the dead in mystic service:—
Tillers of everlasting fields, hewers of mild
Mere dreamed of forests, drawers of sacred
waters,—
A faithful army, carven by artist hands
From lucent alabaster; or stone o'erlaid
With shimmering gold; or silver like a cloud
In surface soft; or wood of sacred cedar.
There in the plenteous midst, all housed around
With dear home-offerings whose tender use
Still waited through the long unliving years,

Heaped round with marvels lay the mummied forms
Of two who waited their eternity!
We seemed to tread the fabled shore
Of some dim underworld! For these were dead,
Long dead, but still they wore the living mask
Of their humanity. They lay exposed
In desecrated coffins, still serene,
Though thieving hands had long since hunted forth
Dear hidden jewels, amulets and charms
Against the terrors of their journey grim.
Torn were the wrappings, wrenched at throat and breast;
Elsewhere the lovely folds of finest cloth
Still clung as priestly hands had so minutely
Wrapped them down to the delicate finger tips.
In gold emblazoned state, though rudely stirred,
The mummies lay, with faces beautiful
Like darkened bronze, and long straight forms outlined
Beneath worn cerements.

The lady of the dead lies quiet here
As if in her fair home, when soon her will
Would be to rise and set about her day
Of gentle doing. Daintily are put
Things of her finest taste to frame her. High
And queenly must she be who haunts with grace
The fragile little sofa, gold embossed.
And the lady's chairs wait by her quietly
Devoting unseen beauty to her dreams.
Near for the lifting of her eager hand
Her dainty table waits, wherein the tale

Of folded broideries and brooding hours
Lies in sweet echo in the enchanted shrine.
Near, lies a casket like a blue bird caught
And set in the dark to dream of its own blue
Old Egypt wrought of lapislazuli
Encrusted deep with softly patterned gold.

There was a most ineffable soft air
Of human pathos haunted that lone room,
As if the spirit essayed yet to inhabit
The old familiar tenure of its days.
For the mute things lay brushed with flowery trace
Of a dissolving presence. One dimly felt
That time, long sealed without, scarce daring yet
To touch the breathless verge, still hung aloof
Lest the imprisoned loveliness take wing
And leave but crumbling sediment. The gloom
Submitted slowly, singly, each new treasure
So long held in its mothering embrace.
Low at our feet, half buried in the gloom
A vase of ambered alabaster lay.
The slender neck swept down into the bloom
Of perfect bowl; the handle curved to frail
Twin lotus stems that ran in breathless flight
Downward to break into the lotus flower
Upon the bowl! To name the rare delight:
Is it not Orpheus song, caught into foam
Afloat on gold-shored seas of classic lore?
Or think we not of Psyche's finger-tip
Holding light-poised a deathless butterfly?
Or Hebe exquisitely holding up
This chalice to the lips of the pale Gods?
We lift it, cool and alabaster clear,

With actual touch, out of the golden gloom
And straight we feel our hand-clasp with the dead
Rivet the strong bonds of humanity.

High piled in ranks the sad meat offerings
Lay in their ebon boxes still untouched
As when the funerary feast was laid
Believingly. Had ever once the spirit
Returned to taste the fleshly food it knew?
Once more returned to look upon the face
It bore in life? Then soft it came and went,
And of the needs prepared, whate'er it took
For nourishment departed as it came—
Touchless, unsensed, unbodied, strange and dim.

As if sad little silver-shodden feet
Had come, and at the portal of dark death
Slipped off their sandals, these all useless now
Lay in mute waiting on the sanded floor.
And we who held them listened wonderingly
To hear, along dim halls of underworld,
The passage of those feet that before death
Walked in them joyfully upon the earth.
Harkening we heard them coming through the dark
All delicate with dews and asphodel,
Brushing with timid step the path that leads
To their own last abode, which walls away
All less diaphanous substance.

Come, oh Kaa!
These are thy things and this thine habitation
Which death hath not made strange to thee, nor set

In ruin. Still, though a shade, thou mayest reclaim
The recollection sweet of earth's delights—
Comfort, repose, food for thy hunger! See!
Thy chairs, thy bed, and for thine old life-dreaming,
This fallen rose, a cushion, softly wove
Of finest fibre filled with down. Thy sleep
Would be enwrapped with all its olden bliss;
To whose invasion soft, relinquishing
Thy starved limbs, thou soon wouldst utter low:
"Ah bitter is immortality, fair fruit
Barren of life's sweet kernel-coating sense!
I sleep, I sink in bliss ephemeral!"

Thy chariot too is here which drew thee once
Toward the confines of thy world, to stand
Against thy battle foes. Rememberest thou
The swift pang that arose as forth thou sentest
Far arrows to the North? Or the proud scorn
Which sat within thy breast as, conqueror,
Thou sawest bound enemies beneath thy foot
That trod the South in splendor?
In this jar
Of heavy alabaster scarce a slave
Could carry, yellow and deep thy honied draught
Lies liquid yet. 'Tis long since thou hast drank,
Else thy fastidious taste had ne'er allowed
The little upturned fly so long to lie
Upon the amber surface deep within
In such appalling insignificance!
'Chance death hath marred thy palate and no more
Mayest cool thy throat with honey of warm bees,
Or feel thy strange thirst satisfied with draughts

Pictured for thee in thousands of stone jars
And numbered on the walls in scores and scores?

No voice awakes, no stir disturbs the still
Inviolate dusk where death so long hath lain
Embalmed in isolation. All is fled!

III

With solemn eyes we see the dead brought forth,
The strangely dead whose human forms still hold
The unloosed semblance of a soul once there.
They come sore-clad in ancient cerements,
Sealed in their slumber with crossed arms of peace,
Out once again to their own desert's blaze
Whence, buried ages back, they softly went
Into their fair wrought sepulchre of dreams.

Are these your Kings, oh venerable land,
Who starred your lotus crown with splendid deeds
When you, alone of all the unborn world
Lay in full blooming beauty? Are these your Kings,
Your Pharaohs, whose immeasurable power
Once to each whim held all the world a thrall?

Nay, these come forth from their eternity
Not as the God-descended Kings remote,
But in more gentle and familiar way
With common aureole of parenthood
To win our love. They had been more enwrapt
With filial love than is the common lot
Of Kings; for sorrow housed with them and hung
Mourning about their sepulchre. Each gift

Disclosed a lingering tenderness. Some daughter's hand
Wrote messages of woe; and twined her gifts
With scenes of her distress. Some lordly son
Tokens of sorrow brought in reverence.
And tears of a lovely queen fell softly once
Upon this golden burial.

Who are these?
No Kings, though lain amid the Vale of Kings
Uncrowned, save by such offering of love,
Unsung save in their tomb. Who then are these?

Go first and gather 'mid the storied queens
The dearest of them, fabled Tiyi, who moved
As the moon-goddess self, untraced and dim,
Within the dream-wrapped dynasties of old.
A stranger to the palace of the King
She came. The lordly Pharaoh lifted her
And set her high in honor over all.
"The beloved of the breast of him
Who trod the earth in splendor." "His small love"
Lingering at his knee in lowliness;
His great queen, sharing his memorials.
None knew if she were of dim eastern stem
Brought from some house, unsung save by the harp
Of her high beauty. Or with an idle glance
Had the Egyptian Pharaoh looking down
Among his subjects, chosen this one soul,
Knowing its rarity? The price of her
Was suffering such as wakened thought entails,
Bearing the soul it wakes to isolation.

She fixed their inward vision far beyond
Its own accustomed close, until in time
Her young lord son stood out against his realm,
Uprooted the old faiths and stilted rule
Of Theban Ra; while her poetic voice
Breathed to him all her delicate beliefs
That broke like blossoms through his heart and led
Him forth to raise new spiritual creed
In canticle to Aten. Wave of belief too high,
It ebbed on shores of old idolatry,
Leaving the two who called it from the void
Outcast in memory. But through the scarred
Memorials the fame of Tiyi survived.

Here at this buried shrine she seems to kneel
Divested of all mystery and sweet
With grieving daughterhood. For in this tomb
She hid her parentage.

Oh Solemn Dead
How touchingly ye come to us, bearing
Your names in piteous dignity! We give
All honor as we read. Thou Iouiya,
Lord of her beside thee lying low,
And parent of her we praise, thy daughter Tiyi;
Honored of Kings, holding high offices
Of royal steward, Keeper of granaries,
Thy King was son to thee, and dear thy head
To all the Kingdom. But most dear
Through thy great fatherhood to history.

The mother Touiyou lies in peace beside
Her mate through this strang dream of being
dead.

Richly and lovingly her child inscribed
Full wealth of titles writ in delicate bands
Across her case of gold. Fair Mother-form
Indeed we love thee! So strangely motherly
Thou seemest to us, grim no more the death
That floods the centuries between us grey.
For out of time's dull waves as a mute dove,
Springs thine exultant tenderness!

So lay
The reverential burden in the blaze
Of this same worshipped sunlight, desert pure,
Which saw the early panoply of grief
Enter this desert lair. Piteous now and full
Of a deserted splendor, as a sun
Long set and rotting in effulgence, lies
This priceless hoard upon the sudden verge
Of its corruption. Wonderful and free
Within their long unbroken slumber lie
These honored two. Nought now to them
Is this rude stirring of their dreams, and nought
The wreckage of their sinister abode.

We fold again
The winding sheet of linen, saffron dyed,
Whose weave is beauteous forever; lay
The horizontal bands of roseate hue—
Two from head to foot and two across—
That held the wrappings. Softly we replace
The simple necklace of dried bloom upon
Their breasts again—blossom it is of sunt
Whose sharp scent feeds the gloomy under air
Of tombs with breath of sun-hot level fields,

And cools the sleeping thought with fragrant
dreams.
So, lapped by quiet waves of memory
That float them ever on its deathless tide,
They may not mourn. Turns now across the sands
The sacred file, retracing solemnly
Its dim remembered coming long ago.
Now may our hands hold faithful stewardship
That bring their precious burden back from death
And at the world's high altar lay it down.

POET

As stood Apollo in the lillied dawn
With startled lyre, when'as the doom immense
Of Titans lifted him to the intense
Experience of godhood newly born;

So stoodest thou, Poet, in thine early morn,
Feeling the keen pain of prophetic sense
Flush thy mortality, in recompense
For earthly loneliness. Thus spirit-born,

Astray from dreams, we find thine instrument
Flight-dropped amid a fairy host of flowers,
Enguarding deep within its resonant heart
The rare bequest of thine immortal art;
Whence we, as thou e'en didst from heavenly powers,
Receive our spiritual sacrament.

RONDEAU

To Mme. J.

The lilies in my garden-close
  Are fragrant, fair, and full of grace;
  They range against an azure space
Their beauteous blooms in ordered rows.
When far the summer season goes
  And leaves my wintered sight no trace
Of lilies in my garden-close,
  So fragrant fair, and full of grace;
I looked upon my lady's face
Where lo! their vanished radiance glows;
Each variation of her pose
  Through subtle motion doth replace
The lilies in my garden-close.

POND LILIES

To Lucy W.

Within the water's shallow glare
White shade you weave, Pond Lily;
A wonder-cup of woodland share
Your crownéd head, Pond Lily!

Within the labyrinth of days,
White threads you weave, Pond Lily;
And all who near your broidered maze
See clear at eve, Pond Lily!

YOUTH

To Theo

All the world is empty,
  My delight is gone;
Starless comes the evening,
  Sunless goes the morn.

Light of heart and foot,
  He is faring free
Where the young world widens
  In activity.

Where the song is singing
  He is happiest,
Answer to the calling
  Rises in his breast,
And his young joy stamps the rhythm
  For his feet upon the quest.

Shut out the little moon,
  The winds arise,
All sweet serenity of gold
  Is blotted from the skies,
And all too soon
  Her fairy reign is told—
Shut out the little moon.

Shut out the little dreams,
  For life is here
To bid us loosen from our grasp
  The treasures that our hearts hold dear,
The golden beams
  Our eager hands would clasp—
Shut out the little dreams.

HOPE'S YEAR

Lightly in the springtime,
Up the leafy slope,
Sped the wingéd maiden—
Silver-cinctured Hope.

Joyful on the levels,
Summer-long she played;
Till the scythe of harvest
To the bloom was laid.

Downward through the autumn
Went in solemn ways,
With a purple shadow
Sorrowing her gaze.

As the snows engulfed her,
North and east and west,
Held eternal embers
Banked within her breast.

AUTUMN UNDERTONE

Silvery shallows slipping along,
Tender and low is your evening song;
Birds on your bordering glades are still,
Light has gone from the low, green hill,
Fallen the petals of wild, sweet roses,
Shadows shorten and summer closes.

Little, slim shallows, sweet and clear,
Ye ripple on, in the autumn drear.
Strong is the law that ye obey,
Not to vary, and not to stay.
The seasons fall from the waning shore,
The sound of the bird is heard no more;
But the force of the law doth ever abide
In the rhythmic flow of the faithful tide.

THREE PRAYERS

Mary, maiden Mary, may I make my praise to thee
While I weave a chaplet of the days that are to be?
Maid of mercy, pure within,
Grant me gladness without sin;
While the world is fair and gay
Walk with me upon the way.
Maiden Mary, kiss my soul to thine own purity!

Mary, Mother Mary, take my gift of womanhood.
Lean to me and hold me in a holy sisterhood!
Spirit-led and passion-willed,
To the realm of love fulfilled
Lo! I come and proudly claim
Woman's crown in thy name.
Mother Mary, grant me all thy grace of plenitude!

Mary, Martyr Mary, in the hour of my tears
Stoop and cleanse my spirit from its heritance of fears.
Touch me with thy holy sense
Of sorrow's deep munificence,
Bind for me mine earthly eyes
That I may see paradise
Rise a flowery vision through the vista of the years!

SISTER WINGS

Wild birds, fly to me
Out of the high sky;
Wild birds, cry to me
As ye pass by!

Ye brush o'er the quiet meadow
Out on your way to the sea;
Whither fare ye, sweeping
Over the meadow and me?

Wings, oh wings of yearning,
Call to your hidden mate
Deep in my bosom dwelling;
Oh wings of yearning, wait!

But on in the shadowy evening,
Out to the shoreless deep,
Ever aloof o'er the quiet earth
Ye silently onward sweep.

Wild birds, carry me
On your wild flight!
Wild birds, marry me
To Heaven's height!

TRANSMUTATION.

Fires die down at night
  That flamed all day;
Thoughts, too, sink into sleep
  Like ashes gray.

Gray, but alert for dawn
  New risen and rosy,
When fire and thought, reborn,
  Flush a faint posy.

All through aerial time
  Dark and light intermingle;
No shade of grief or joy
  Goes unspun and single!

WHOM HE LOVETH

Of tears and anguishes and ills
  God's hand solicitous
With intuition sure distils
  A spirit-draught for us.

Our songs and laughters and delights
  Are happy sparks that fly
Beneath the smiting hammer-strokes
  God's hand too doth apply.

'Tis now of weal and now of woe
  Our portion yet must be;
For so God's hand shapes strong and slow
  Our soul's infinity.

INNER PEACE

How sweet the summer winds that pass
  Melodiously through
The straight-rowed orchard's cooling aisles
  From fount of endless blue!

The shearéd sheep here wander by
  In noontide idleness,
With choice of equal sun and shade
  Each gentle mood to bless.

Their simple lives well-ordered go
  Serene from field to fold,
Nor ever bird or star aloft
  Do their dim eyes behold.

And looking on the gentle scene
  Our lives engrossing cares
Sink into their proportioned place
  And leave us nature's heirs.

THE CAMEL-DRIVER

In the glaring noon
I hear him croon
A quavering rhythmic chant;
I see him swing
Like a witless thing
On the camel's hump aslant.

Riding high
'Neath a burning sky
He dreams of the palm-shade far;
And at evening's glow
His lone thoughts go
To the cool of the evening star.

Never he cares
For the burden he bears
From the desert down to the river;
While he and his heart
May live apart
In the realm of his dreams forever.

"ARAIGNEE DU SOIR, ESPOIR"

"Spinner at silvery loom,
Strange you should shyly take
Time of delicate gloom
For a fine task's sake!

An' you give me a thread tonight
Faith, I could fairly spin,
Out of its slender beam,
A dazzling woof
To the star aloof
Deep to its heart within."
Spin, spin, in the pale twilight,
Spider and heart a'dream!

The spider ended his task,
A fabric so frail and clear
Scarce through a summer night
Would its fine mesh wear.

The lover he wove and wove
A miracle of song;
And set it singing afar,
So fine and sweet,
To his dear love's feet
Ever the evening long.
For she to his eyes was the shining star
Set in the sky above.

BEE SONG

Yellow bee, yellow bee,
  Deep honey lover,
Have you forgotten that
  Summer is over?
You and your winged train
Linger here all in vain,
Never to nest again,
  Improvident rover!

Once what a joy you had
  In the fair season,
When with your duty clear
  Life had a reason!
Now when the flower-bloom
Yielded hath unto doom,
For you there is no room—
  Staying is treason!

Yellow bee, yellow bee,
  Far from me flying,
Thou art the emblem of
  Summer a-dying.
Golden the shadow cast
By all things overpast,
Until their track at last
  Leads homeward skying.

IN TRINITY GARDEN, OXFORD

Where are your unseen nests,
Oh doves of invisible voices?
Rear your plumaged throats
Out of the branches embrasure
  Into my vision!

None of the full trees tell
Where your soft breasts lie brooding,
Saving the clear-boughed cedar
Whose stately branches do honor
  To guests in the garden.

Level the fair lawn lies,
Meek amid bordering leafage of
Lime tree, locust and larch.
Slowly the daylight is shortened
  Under their umbrage.

Lured by your murmuring notes,
Under the ivied darkness
A gold eyed, black cat stalks,
Haunted by phantoms of vision
  As we of desire!

Have ye no answer innate
Hid in your ancient language?
Oh oracles, hidden above us,
Delicate, wise and abiding,
  Solve our enigma!

When the late chimes fall faint
Adown from the grey-statued tower,
Sink ye to feathery rest;
Peace then, oh doves, from your bosoms
Blesses the garden.

ERRANT ARTEMIS

High
In the sky
The lonely moon is riding;
Least
In the East
Of all the host abiding.

Young,
To be swung
Within the sphere immense;
Frail,
Not to quail
Before such eminence.

With a touch
Of such
God-endowered grace,
Emboldening,
As goldening,
She rises into space.

Until
She doth will
To poise her young divinity
Aloft
In the croft
Of infinity.

Ceased
Hath the feast
Among Immortal Peers;

Bereft,
When she left
To seek the open spheres.

Fain
They to strain
Far immortal gaze;
Afraid
Lest the maid
Lose the heavenly ways.

Far
As a star
She attains her quest;
Then shining,
As declining,
She seeks the darkened West;

Where,
Glowing fair,
An earth-child she lies,
Deep
In a sleep
Devoid of memories.

And dreams
That she seems,
From their sight sunken under,
To smile
All the while
At the god's wonder.

THE WHITE HOUSE GARDEN IN MAY.

All enclosed by a railing high,
Under a sapphire evening sky,
  Lingers a lovely scene,
Scene that a fairy wand had striven
To win for a palace in fairy heaven
  Fit for a fairy queen.

Crowned with the blossoming bushes of May,
Downward the low, little hills survey
  The level of grassy space
Daintily set in garlands of bloom,
O'erhung by the larches' dreamy gloom
  And the willowy wands' young grace.

Flowering quince and the bridal wreath
Bewilder the air by their mingled breath,
  And delicate deutzias white,
Set like shimmering frost between
Sheath-like yuccas of darker green,
  Leap to a flowering flight.

Sweet at the tall trees' hidden roots
The daffodils and narcissus shoots
  Stand in their frank attire;
Looking aloft to the embowering trees
Stirred by the young birds faint unease
  Under their song desire.

Soft storm clouds of purpurial hue
Veil the face of the sun from view;
Mingling shadow and gleam
Flicker and flare in a fairy dance
Faint as a garment's waving glance
In a dissolving dream.

A fountain, lily-and iris-ringed,
Springs as a naiad spirit-winged
Forth to the ether away;
Soon again is her form withdrawn
Back to the earth by the arms of a faun
Tired of piping and play.

The central spray from its airy wrack
Falls in diaphanous motion back,
Faint on the surface of air;
The outer encircling jets are thrown
Into the bowl with bubble and moan
O'erbrimming in fulness there.

Fair and far through the twilight veil
Gleams the enmarbled beauty pale
Of arch and of colonnade;
Where a temple of Grecian art,
Simple and pure in whole and in part,
Is set in the sylvan glade.

Slow as the exquisite hour glides
High o'er the heavens the young moon rides
Stilling the garden to rest;
And the burden of sweetness, overflowing,
Sinks in a haven beyond its knowing
Deep in the human breast.

ODE TO POLYMNIA

For Pauline R.

Muse Immortal! turn thy solemn eyes
Adown from thy Parnassian Paradise!
  Hath not its echo caught thee,
This 'passioned wonder of deep melody
Now held, now lifted high in ecstasy,
  Like chaliced incense brought thee?

Oh, hark! 'round thy celestial abode
Thy swaying lilies herald forth her mood
  Who serveth at thy shrine;
This maid immortal, child of mortal earth,—
Yet ask thy guardian lilies of her worth,
  Oh, Fount of Sound Divine!

They herald her who, worshipping thy wonder,
Grew tranced and went uplifted as one under
  Thy gracious stigmata;
Since when she moves among us ministrant,
Yet ever stands with hands propitiant
  Before thy flame-white altar.

My gaze hath often set in sweet dismaying
Upon her lithe, blest fingers at their playing;
  Or in a pained delight
Watched the white sweep of pallor o'er her face
As, too intensely touched by spirit grace,
  She curtained her insight.

Thou knowest, Sacred Maiden, but for this
Her faintness, far too deep of intense bliss
  Our clod-housed souls would drink;

So fall her fair hands dumb, when to thy throne
She bears and holds us upward one by one
A moment e'er we sink.

Scarce had our vision delicately seen,
Substantiate, Helicon and Hippocrene,
Nor felt the wafted breath
Of presences whose glory in a gleam
Shoot earthward, mortalized within our dream
As we in death.

When the loosed magic of her harmonies
Scatters sound-petals, well had one of these,
Pressed close to thy mute breast,
Won thy divinity, drawn thy yearning feet
Down to the earth's ways, perilously sweet
To thy divine unrest.

Oh, templed in her, what if it were Thou?
Those tresses honey-hued around her brow
That givest them their toss?
Whose prisoned visage, seen a moment there
In hers incarnate, sent a sudden flare
Our burning sight across?

What if her eyelids, drooping with deep awe,
Down-weighted were by what thy whisper bore
Of couchant miracle?
If leans thy being inwardly to hers
Soft as a marsh reed to the wind that stirs
The air to oracle?

She rises with a lily-motion swayed,
Back from the pressure which thy presence made
During thine incarnation;
The irised tissues of thy garment's weave
In hostaged beauty lingeringly cleave
To her thy habitation.

In such wise, Visitant Immortal, deign,
Between thy comings, that we have again
The fulness of her nature;
To infuse each vein and bruiséd filament
With store of mortal sweetness, they being spent
By their divine inflature.

When won from thine immortalizing fire
Ere it hath reft her of all earth-desire,
Oh, strangely trait'rous, we
Torture her sister soul with chrismal share
Of tears, then loose it carrier-winged to bear
Our burden back to thee!

For thus through her we hear our own heart's story
Take birth within this rainbow-fountained glory,
Gushing its beauty mortal
On some far threshold where, oh Goddess Maiden,
Thou to this burden wherewith we were laden
Openest thy deathless portal.

TO CHILDREN

LITTLE LIVES

Oh little lives with folded wings,
  Oh little hearts still sleeping,
Oh little feet that seek the way,
  Oh eyes unused to weeping;

How many wings you spur to flight,
  How many hearts you waken!
How many lost ones you have lead,
  How many tears have slaken!

CHILD SONG

The sun and the day have run away
  Over the hills in the West;
And the little lambs lie beneath the sky
  In innocent rest.

From every ship the white sails slip,
  The cowslip petals close;
And a shy little bird gives a good-night word
  Ere the daylight goes.

Sweet and long was the summer song
  Sung to a summer tune;
And a little child prays that to-morrow's rays
  Will brighten the hill-top soon.

WAYSIDE SONG

Grey little church in the valley,
  Green little sheep-flecked hill;
Little rose-cloud in the heaven,
  And evening calm and still.

Prayer in the quiet valley,
  Peace on the placid heath;
Joy in the rosy heaven,
  Dreams in the hearts beneath.

PLAYMATES

Butterflies and babies,
  Wings and little feet,
Playing all the morning
  In the meadow sweet.

All the summer morning
  Let them dance and play,
But when evening cometh
  Cuddle them away.

BLOSSOMS

A little tree
So blithe to see
With blossoms all alit;
Dear little heart
How like thou art
To it!

Its shadow small
Falls scarce at all
Upon the patient grass;
And thine is quite
As soft and light,
My lass.

In pink and white
It is bedight
Full fair and sweet to see;
In daintiness
And graciousness
Like thee.

It is so young
No birds have sung
Within its boughs. They fear
It is a stray
And naughty fay
Dropped here!

SECRET VOYAGE

Through pearly waters and violet,
  Toward the close of day,
A little bark with wingéd sails
  Wafted its gentle way.

Under the ancient amber cliffs
  Its lightsome way it bore,
Soft as a little dream escaped
  From the bondaged time of yore.

Oh, where are you going, little bark,
  That may not stay your flight?
What distant shore do you hope to gain
  Before the close of night?

No answer sent the little bark,
  But silently sailed on,
Until it was a tiny speck
  Upon the setting sun.

A DUET

Sailing along at the end of day,
When the sun had sunk to rest,
And the naughty little clouds of gold
Ran out of their home in the west,

I heard the song of the merry frogs
Upon the river shore,
And high above in the quiet cliff
A little owl I saw.

The frolicsome frogs sang loud and clear
Of many pleasant things,
But the mournful little owl sat dumb,
A dreaming of dead kings.

CHURCH BELLS

In summer-time and winter
The little church bell rings,
Morning, noon and evening,
For people and for kings,
To sing their hymns and say their prayers
And other holy things.

In every land a church bell rings
And people gather there
Just as we do, with bended heads
And hands clasped tight in prayer.
And all are glad because they know
That God is everywhere.

SHIPS

Two white sails peep over the hill,
  How strange it seems to me!
For who would dream that the meadow-land
  Led to the wide grey sea?

The wide grey sea beyond the walls
  Where ships go out at night
So far, so far, they can't return
  When comes the morning light.

But on must sail, and on and on,
  All day and night and day,
Until they spy another land,
  Though it be far away.

Poor ships that cannot stay at home,
  I hope that you will find
As sweet a shore and bright a sun
  As you have left behind.

LIGHT AND SHADOW

Sunshine and morning hours
Bring to beds of waving flowers.
Bees and butterflies so bright
That love the honey and the light.

Day done, and evening hours
Bring repose to weary flowers.
In the still and darkening air
Not a bee may linger there.

THE EARTH AND LITTLE CHILDREN

Hither, children! Hush and hear!
Now's the flowery time of year,
When with opening flower and leaf
Everything feels glad relief.

Let your little hearts sing madly,
And your voices ring out gladly;
Dance and call, fairies all,
In a pretty madrigal.

See how fair the earth is drest,
In the springtime loveliest;
Like a little child whose gladness
Charms away our winter sadness.

Happy earth, all full of singing,
Joy to little children bringing.

A CHANGE OF MIND

Upon the road
I met a toad
  Near by the garden bright;
'Twas spotted brown
From feet to crown,
  A most amazing sight!

It looked so queer
And hopped so near
  I quickly turned away
And meekly said:
"My poppy bed
  I'll see another day."

SUMMER MORNING

Bees in the larkspur
Busily burrowing
Setting the flower-bells ringing;
Birds in the bushes
Flitting and fluttering,
Filling the copses with singing.

Blue eyes opening
Wide from their slumbering
Ever so far away;
Little hearts, little hands
In other lands,
I wish you were here to play!

IN MAY

To Eleanor

It was a pleasant afternoon
  When we went forth from town
To take the air and view the scene
  And wander up and down.

We visited a pretty house
  And found it was too small;
We peered about and praised it well
  And made a pleasant call.

Then up the road until we reached
  The Club-House cool and free;
We sat upon the lawn and there
  Had toast and jam and tea.

A pretty view of sloping green,
  A grove of shady trees;
And far away, the distant hills
  Across the misty leas.

At cool of eve, refreshed and sweet,
  We came contented home;
As doves, all day upon the wing,
  Do softly, surely come.

WATTIE'S GARDEN

I put the small seeds in the ground
With proper space between;
I cleared and smoothed the earth around,
And kept it nice and clean.

A tiny blade of green pushed through
The dark and heavy earth;
And soon a little pair of leaves
Unfolded into birth.

Another blade, another blade
Till all the place was full;
And soon so many leaves uncurled
A few I had to pull.

I watched and loved them every day
And watered them when dry;
I brushed the rose-bugs all away
And weeded carefully.

Through sun and rain and fog and wind
They grew and grew and grew,
Until a lovely garden fair
Lay open to the view.

Oh hollyhocks and fox gloves,
Arise up tall and sweet;
While garden pinks and coxcombs bright
Are blooming at my feet.

Big canterbury bells of blue
  Are ringing silently;
And columbines are shining bright
  As moonlight on the sea.

White plumes of spiarea wave
  Just handy to my reach
So I may pluck them for my friends
  And give a plume to each.

The lovely roses planted near
  Are not my really own,
They are my Mummy dear's but still
  I love them every one.

And here amid the garden flowers
  In fairy land I roam
While all the time I'm just as near
  As I can be to home.

PEGGY SWEET

Prim little Peg came out to me
Curled and smocked and sweet to see.
I wanted to hold her on my knee
And keep her forever there; but she,
Light as a cloud o'er a summer sea,
Floated away from me airily.
For all things mortal elusive be
Because of their immortality.

BROTHERHOOD

A path across the meadow
Diagonal and far,
Leads me to the waving place
Where the rushes are.

Rushes oh! and Iris
Where the finches sing;
Beauty on the lowly earth,
Sweetness on the wing.

Let us, like the wild birds
Pluck and eat a berry;
All the world is full of glee,
We too will be merry.

Run and laugh and play,
On the wave of wonder;
If your heart is light
You will not slip under.

CLOVER'S HUMMING SONG

I must flower and overbrim
  So my lover the bee
Will come from afar
  To suck honey from me.

Bee law will bring him
  Wide the world over;
He is my own bee,
  I am his clover.

Flower and fill the cup
  With sun and honey,
Shadows and pearls of rain
  Must be made sunny.

Clover of rose and sweet,
  Wait I the morning
When my far lover-bee
  Comes with gold crowning.

GARDEN SONG

Rain in the garden
  Falling fresh and sweet,
Cooling the flowers
  After noon-day heat.

Robins after rainfall
  In the wet sun;
Primroses folding,
  And the day is done.

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